



Understanding and Expression in Poetry Translation--A Comparative Analysis of Three Translations of "Guan Ju"

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Abstract. In the translation of Chinese poems, different translators are influenced by their different intrinsic or extrinsic. Translators differ in their understanding of the original text, and thus in their translations. Many translators have translated Guan Ju, and there are more than 20 English translations of it. In this paper, the translations of Guan Ju by three translators, Yuanchong Xu, James Legge and Arthur David Waley, are selected as materials for analysis. The three translators have different philosophies and focuses, different perspectives, and all of them have their specialties. Comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between the translations of the three authors from different perspectives enables the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture in different ways. Yuanchong Xu's translation is more based on ancient Chinese philosophical thought, is more artistic, and conveys the thought content of the original text. James Legge mostly uses the direct translation method, which is plain and pristine and focuses on the literal meaning of the text. Arthur David Waley mainly adopts the Italian translation method, which translates the rhyme of the poem in some places, but some traditional Chinese cultural contents are still poorly translated.

Keywords: Guan Ju, translation, Yuanchong Xu, James Legge, Arthur David Waley

1 Introduction

The Book of Songs is the earliest collection of poems in China, rich in Chinese culture. As the first poem in the Book of Songs, there are more than 20 English translations of Zhou Nan - Guan Ju (hereafter referred to as "Guan Ju"). In the first chapter of this poem, the birds of Guan Ju chirp to each other and fall in love, giving rise to the association of a lady with a gentleman. It mainly depicts the love story of a man pursuing a woman. Initially, the man could not sleep at night and tossed and turned because he could not pursue the woman, but when he pursued the woman, he rejoiced and played the zither and drums to express his inner excitement and leaping feeling [1]. The language of the poem is beautiful, and it is good at using double rhymes and overlapping

words, which enhances the beauty of the sound of the poem and the vividness of the writing of people and sounds.

Different translators have different interpretations of the original text, which results in different translations. Incorrect analysis of the understanding of the original text can lead to mistranslations. Therefore, if people want to accurately translate and convey the content of the poem, they have to make a deep research and understanding of different cultures, and combine with the culture of the original language's own country, in order to carry out a better translation research. In this paper, the translations of Guan Ju by three translators are selected to analyze their differences.

2 Translator's Introduction

2.1 Yuanchong Xu

Yuanchong Xu graduated from the Foreign Languages Department of Southwest United University. He was admitted to the Institute of Foreign Literature of the Academy of Tsinghua University in 1944 and has been engaged in literary translation for more than 80 years. He loves translation and has a high degree of cultural self-awareness and translation self-confidence [2]. His translations focused on the English translation of ancient Chinese poems, forming the method and theory of rhyming style translation of poems. His translations are more literary in nature, preserving the original character of the original poems. His translations not only have to be accurate in expression, but also focus on the artistic expression of the whole poem as it is translated. His translations have the prominence of the translator's subjectivity, do not separate language from culture, and have a distinct cultural stance. He pays close attention to the cultural interpretation of translations in language conversion. He has been able to adapt to the realities of translation, and has come up with his own principles and methods of dealing with it. He honors the original mood of the poem, while trying to convey the emotion the author intended. His theory of translation is based on ancient Chinese philosophical thought.

2.2 James Legge

James Legge was a leading modern English sinologist. He was the principal of Anglo-Chinese College in Hong Kong and a missionary of the London Missionary Society. He was the first to systematically study and translate the ancient Chinese classics. He was an early Western missionary and sinologist who came to China in the 19th century. In 1860 he was appointed to the Board of Education and strongly advocated the establishment of a central college to provide Chinese students with the opportunity to learn English, advocating a practical approach to teaching in place of the traditional recitation of the three-character sutra. Early missionaries used the Confucian classics as a medium in order to carry out their missionary activities in passing [3]. He translated the work of "The Book of Songs" not only as a work, but also as an interpretation and dissemination of the classical Confucian culture, because he wanted to understand and familiarize himself with the Chinese Confucian classics and the ideology of the Chinese sages and

predecessors, so as to facilitate better missionary work. He teaches mostly to professionals in Western academia. Therefore, his translation retains respect for the original text and basically translates the poem word by word and sentence by sentence. Instead of translating large portions of meaning. He tries his best to retain the original literary form and word order of the poems. The characteristics of the original poem are preserved on the premise that the target readers can read and understand and accept it.

2.3 Arthur David Waley

Arthur David Waley, from his earliest years, was a brilliant man, with a love of language and literature. He was the greatest sinologist of the 20th century. Once called "the outstanding translator of Far Eastern literature and culture" by *The Times* (*The Times*, 1966), he made great achievements in translating Chinese and Japanese literature. He devoted his life to the study of Oriental cultures, "translating more than 40 books and writing more than 160 articles on Chinese and Japanese culture" [4]. He was awarded a scholarship to the Royal College, Cambridge, for excellence in classics. The influence of his two teachers, renowned professors Dickenson and Moore, who admired the ancient civilizations of the Orient, deeply inspired him and gave him the desire to devote himself to the study of Oriental culture. Under the guidance of a missionary who was well-versed in the Chinese language, he went to the library to study books and materials on Chinese studies. The large collection of classical Chinese poetry fascinated him, and he persevered in his study of Oriental and Chinese studies and devoted himself to the desire to translate the Chinese classics into English and introduce them to the English readers. However, he had never been to China and had never experienced Chinese culture and Chinese civilization on the ground. Therefore, he used refined words and often adopted the direct translation method to preserve the classic imagery and culture. His target readers are ordinary people and ordinary readers in the UK, and his language is simple and easy to understand, natural and colloquial, which brings him closer to his readers and is easy for ordinary readers to accept [5,6]. Under the influence of the imagism trend in the early 20th century, Waley realized the position and value of imagery in classical Chinese poetry. Therefore, when translating Chinese poetry, he always "avoided adding his personal imagery or hiding the imagery of the original text" and "tried his best to keep the basic imagery in the original poem [7]."

3 Analysis

3.1 Original Text

周南·关雎

关关雎鸠，在河之洲。窈窕淑女，君子好逑。
参差荇菜，左右流之。窈窕淑女，寤寐求之。
求之不得，寤寐思服。悠哉悠哉，辗转反侧。

参差荇菜，左右采之。窈窕淑女，琴瑟友之。
参差荇菜，左右芼之。窈窕淑女，钟鼓乐之。[8]

3.2 Translated Text

Yuanchong Xu's Translated Text.

Cooing and Wooing

By riverside a pair Of turtledoves are cooing; There is a maiden fair whom a young
man is wooing.
Water flows left and right Of cresses here and there; The youth yearns day and night
For the maiden so fair.
His yearning grows so strong, He cannot fall asleep, But tosses all night long, So deep
in love, so deep!
Now gather left and right Cress long or short and tender! O lute, play music light For
the fiancée so slender!
Feast friends at left and right On cresses cooked tender! O bells and drums, delight
The bride so sweet and slender!

James Legge's Translated Text.

Kwan-kwan go the ospreys,
On the islet in the river.
The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady.
For our prince a good mate she.
Here long, there short, is the duckweed,
To the left, to the right, borne about by the current.
The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady:
Waking and sleeping, he sought her.
He sought her and found her not, And walking and sleeping he thought about her.
Long he thought; oh! Long and anxiously;
On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again.
Here long, there short, is the duckweed;
On the left, on the right, we gather it.
The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady:
With lutes, small and large, let us give her friendly welcome.
Here long, there short, is the duckweed;
On the left, on the right, we cook and present it.
The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady:
With bells and drums let us show our delight in her. [9]

Arthur David Waley's Translated Text.

"Fair, fair," cry the ospreys
On the island in the river.
Lovely is this noble lady,

Fit bride for our lord.
 In patches grows the water mallow;
 To left and right one must seek it.
 Shy was this noble lady;
 Day and night he sought her.
 Sought her and could not get her;
 Day and night he grieved.
 Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy thoughts,
 Now on his back, now tossing on to his side.
 In patches grows the water mallow;
 To the left and right one must gather it.
 Shy is this noble lady;
 With great zither and little we hearten her.
 In patches grows the water mallow;
 To left and right one must choose it.
 Shy is this noble lady;
 With bells and drums we will gladden her. [10]

3.3 Translation Comparison

The Translation of “关关雉鸠”.

Table 1. “关关雉鸠”

Original text	关关雉鸠
Yuanchong Xu	turtledoves are cooing
James Legge	Kwan-kwan go the ospreys
Arthur David Waley	"Fair, fair," cry the ospreys

The word “关关” was originally an onomatopoeia, the sound of two birds, male and female, responding to each other's calls. Yuanchong Xu's use of "cooing" makes the reader feel the softness and beauty of his call. James Legge's "kwan-kwan" is directly transliterated according to the Chinese pronunciation. This is faithful to the original language, retains the original elements of the source culture, and conveys the bird's call in the source culture at the time and in the place, but it may be unfamiliar to the English readers, and the readers may not be able to relate to it. Arthur David Waley is using "fair, fair" as a direct expression of his call. On the one hand, the image of "a fair maiden" is shaped from the point of view of the readers of the translated language, which also echoes the theme of the poem; on the other hand, it retains the consistency of the form of superposition with that of the source language, and simulates the beautiful and beautiful cry of osprey, which creates the mood of the birds singing happily in the quiet wilderness of the original poem [7].

“雉鸠” is a rare bird in China. Yuanchong Xu used the word "turtledoves" to denote it. It was symbolized in ancient times as an auspicious bird of longevity, happiness and peace. Both James Legge and Arthur David Waley used "ospreys". This is a fish hawk with white belly feathers that swoops to the surface to catch fish. It doesn't have the

nice warm atmosphere of the poem. All three use the plural, the poem is about the interaction between a gentleman and a lady, and osprey naturally come in pairs, which is more in keeping with the mood of the poem, and in this way it is also in keeping with the picaresque. (As table 1 shows)

The Translation of“窈窕淑女，君子好逑”.

Table 2. “窈窕淑女，君子好逑”

Original text	窈窕淑女，君子好逑
Yuanchong Xu	There is a maiden fair whom a young man is wooing.
James Legge	The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady. For our prince a good mate she.
Arthur David Waley	Lovely is this noble lady, Fit bride for our lord.

It is not just the woman who stands out in the poem for her looks, but the woman who is quiet and poetic on the inside. Yuanchong Xu used "maiden fair" to translate, but only translated that she was a young girl. James Legge translates with four consecutive adjectives: "modest, retiring, virtuous, young". It reads in one fell swoop, is unforgettable, and gives color to a monotonous piece of writing. But this also all describes the woman as shy, demure, and young, and does not show her inner civilization. Arthur David Waley's "Lovely is this noble lady" is also written about a woman who is slim and does not show her inner self. (As table 2 shows)

The Translation of“琴瑟”.

Table 3. “琴瑟”

Original text	琴瑟
Yuanchong Xu	lute
James Legge	lute
Arthur David Waley	zither

Yuanchong Xu and James Legge both used the word "lute." (An early type of musical instrument with strings, played like a guitar.) It is a general term for a type of ancient musical instrument used during the European period from the Middle Ages to the Baroque. The two translators used the word "lute" in their translations. In ancient China, these are two instruments that are unique to China, both stringed instruments. “琴” is 5 or 7 strings. “瑟” is 25 or 50 strings. So the translation is still lacking.

Arthur David Waley used "zither." (musical instrument with many strings on a flat sounding-board, played with a plectrum or the fingers). It is a flat, boxy stringed instrument, played by hand or plectrum [11]. It's also not an accurate translation of it. Therefore, there are some limitations for translators to accurately and aptly translate some traditional Chinese cultures. (As table 3 shows)

The Translation of“参差荇菜”.

Table 4. “参差荇菜”

Original text	参差荇菜
Yuanchong Xu	Cress long or short and tender
James Legge	Here long, there short, is the duckweed;
Arthur David Waley	In patches grows the water mallow

All three translators used different translations for “参差” and “荇菜”. Firstly, Yuanchong Xu used "long and short" to translate “参差”. Different heights because of the different lengths of the plants have a jagged look to them. The word "cress" is used to translate “荇菜”, which translates as watercress. The meaning is somewhat different from the original text. Finally, the word "tender" is used again as a modifier for plants that are gentle, tender and soft. It puts the whole piece in a nice, gentle atmosphere that doesn't come across as stiff and gives the reader a sense of the picture.

James Legge expressed “参差” by saying "Here long, there short". Much the same as Yuanchong Xu, both are represented by different lengths. James Legge's “荇菜” used "duckweed". Some of the things that are unique to China are difficult for translators to translate.

Arthur David Waley used "patch" to mean "patch", which is not the original meaning. This is very different from the original meaning of poetry. “参差” is meant to indicate that the Nymphoides in the water are of different heights and staggered, rather than having patches. "荇菜" is translated with "mallow". They're all plants in the water, but there's a difference. For traditional Chinese things, some translations are impossible to translate. (As table 4 shows)

4 Conclusion

The culture of Chinese poetry is profound, and its rhythms and imagery cannot be translated from other languages, and it is also learned to be expressed in Chinese. Whether Chinese translators or foreign translators, for the translation of some unique traditional culture or things unique to China in ancient Chinese poems, there will inevitably be some parts that cannot be translated or can only be translated roughly. Part of it is the unique inner beauty of Chinese culture, which cannot be reproduced in other languages. Chinese writing is profound and its flavor needs to be read carefully. At the same time, the translation is affected by the translator's subjective initiative, the translator's era and social background have a great influence on the translator, the reader has to read more than one version to compare and contrast to read and analyze.

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